**Nelson A. Rockefeller Center for Public Policy and the Social Sciences**

**Dartmouth College**

**PBPL 20: CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN**

**AMERICAN POLITICS AND PUBLIC POLICY**

**Summer 2011 Term**

Professor Charles Wheelan 2A: Tues./Thurs., 2:00-3:50 p.m.

205 Rockefeller Hall X-Hour: Wed., 4:00-4:50 p.m.

Telephone: 646-0650 Office Hours: Wed. 10:00-Noon

Email: Charles.Wheelan@Dartmouth.edu and by appointment

This course addresses the major policy areas that are shaping the current political and policy debates at the national level. These issues include but are not limited to the federal deficit, health care reform, the public education system, financial bailouts, and partisan politics. Each policy area will feature a public lecture by a policy maker or expert in the area. In most cases, the guest speakers will meet exclusively with the Public Policy 20 students for a lecture and question and answer session. In other cases, the guests will give a campus address that Public Policy 20 students will be required to attend.

Course assessment will be based upon writing assignments and class participation. Students will prepare briefs on the week’s topic, questions for the featured speaker, and critiques of the speaker’s themes and responses.

The lead instructor will be Professor Charles Wheelan ‘88, who is visiting from the Harris School of Public Policy at the University of Chicago. The other participating Dartmouth faculty members are Andrew Samwick, Bruce Sacerdote, Deborah Brooks, Dean Lacy, and President Jim Kim. Other faculty members may be invited to participate at points in the course.

One course meeting each week will be devoted to preparing for the week’s speaker and discussing the content of the previous week. The second class meeting will be reserved for the guest speaker who will be asked to address an assigned topic. Every effort will be made to keep the invited guests on topic, so as to improve the depth and focus of the course.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

The class will require eight short memos (roughly 1,500 to 2,000 words) summarizing and critiquing the content of the week’s guest lecture. The memo should be modeled in tone and substance on an editorial critique that might appear in a major newspaper or news magazine. The focus of these assignments is threefold: 1) To expose students to the policy issues presented in the course and make them aware of the relevant political context; 2) To train students to think critically about the plans and ideas presented by the guest speakers; 3) To give students repeated opportunities to present their analysis succinctly and persuasively in writing.

Students are also responsible for background reading on each week’s policy topic and for preparing questions in advance of class for each guest speaker. The course grade will be based on the following: an average of a student’s best six policy memos (70%); quizzes on course reading (20%); class participation and questions prepared in advance for our guest speakers (10%).

COURSE LOGISTICS

Each week, a specific faculty member will “own” the content. This faculty member will be responsible for preparing students on the relevant policy content in advance of the guest lecture, leading the Q and A with the guest speaker, and grading the weekly student memos. All reading is to be done for the Tuesday class. Weekly memos are due electronically on Monday at noon. **Please note that for copyright reasons, you will only be able to access readings posted on Blackboard from a computer recognized as part of the Dartmouth community.**

BOOKS

The following books are required for the course. They are available at Wheelock Books:

Wheelan. *Introduction to Public Policy*, W.W. Norton.

Bittle and Johnson. *Where Does the Money Go? Your Guided Tour to the Federal Budget Crisis*, Collins.

Irwin. *Free Trade Under Fire*, Princeton University Press.

Staff of the *Washington Post*. *Landmark: The Inside Story of America’s New Health-Care Law and What It Means for Us All*. Public Affairs, 2010.

Robert Reich. *Aftershock: The Next Economy and America’s Future*, 2010.

SPEAKERS AT A GLANCE

6/23 Judd Gregg

6/24 Tim Geithner

6/30

7/5

7/14 President Jim Kim

7/18 Rob Portman

7/21

7/25 Jon Huntsman

7/28 Joel Klein

8/4 Robert Reich

8/11 Hank Paulson

8/18 Jeff Immelt

8/23 Frank Newport

WEEK 1: (THURSDAY, JUNE 23RD)

**OVERVIEW OF AMERICA’S BUDGET DEFICIT CHALLENGE**

**FACULTY: WHEELAN, BROOKS, SAMWICK**

*The guests will address the current state of federal finances and how the nation ought to address those challenges. The talk may also address fiscal challenges at the state and local levels.*

THURSDAY, JUNE 23

GUEST: SENATOR JUDD GREGG

**Reading:**

Charles Krauthammer. “Our Salutary Debt-Ceiling Scare,” *Washington Post*, June 2, 2011.

Charles Krauthammer. “The Grand Compromise,” *Washington Post*, April 14, 2011.

Charles Krauthammer. “After Ryan’s Leap, a Rush of Deficit Demagoguery,” *Washington Post*, April 7, 2011.

Eugene Robinson. “The G.O.P.’s Medicare Headache,” *Washington Post*, May 23, 2011.

Eugene Robinson. “The Word Most Politicians Ignore: Jobs,” *Washington Post*, April 25, 2011.

Eugene Robinson. “The Selfish Budget? Or the Selfless One,” *Washington Post*, April 14, 2011.

Eugene Robinson. “In Budget Wars, the GOP Demands the Impossible,” *Washington Post*, April 11, 2011.

FRIDAY, JUNE 24

GUEST: TREASURY SECRETARY TIM GEITHNER

WEEK 2: (JUNE 28TH AND 30TH)

**FISCAL CHALLENGES II**

**FACULTY: SAMWICK**

**Readings:**

Scott Bittle and Jean Johnson. *Where Does the Money Go? Your Guided Tour to the Federal Budget Crisis.* Revised edition, January 2011. Harper Paperbacks.

Lawrence Summers, “The State of the U.S. Economy: Risks of Recession, Prospects for Policy,” Speech delivered at the Brookings Institution, Washington, DC, December 19, 2007.

Andrew A. Samwick, “A Better Way to Deal with Downturns,” The Washington Post. January 27, 2008.

Andrew A. Samwick, “A Budget that Plans for the Future,” The Ripon Forum, Volume 42, No. 1, February/March 2008, 27-28.

Christina D. Romer, “Fiscal Policy in the Obama White House: Reasoning, Results, and Challenges Going Forward,” Speech delivered at Reed College, November 17, 2010.

“The Moment of Truth,” Report of the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform, December 1, 2010.

Alan J. Auerbach and William G. Gale.  “Tempting Fate: The Federal Budget Outlook,” Manuscript, University of California, Berkeley, June 2, 2011. Available at:

(Optional) “I.O.U.S.A: The Movie,” a documentary produced by the Peter G. Peterson Foundation.

WEEK 3: (JULY 5TH AND 7TH)

**INTRODUCTION TO POLICY AND POLITICS**

**FACULTY: WHEELAN AND BROOKS**

TUESDAY, JULY 5

**Readings:**

Wheelan. *Introduction to Public Policy*, Chapters 1-8.

Bruce Reed. “Bruce Reed on Washington’s Warring Subcultures,” *Washington Monthly*, November/December 2009.

“Not Only Politicians Fudge the Issues,” *The Economist*, April 22, 2010.

THURSDAY, JULY 7

**Readings:**

Pare Jansen Engle and Byron Shafer, “Where Are We in History? 2010 in the Longest Run,” *The Forum: Midterm Elections of 2010,* Vol. 8, Issue 4 (2010).

James E. Campbell, “The Midterm Election of 2010: A Triple Wave Election,” *The Forum: Midterm Elections of 2010.*

Jeffrey M. Stonecash, “The 2010 elections: Party Pursuits, Voter Perceptions, and the Chancy Game of Politics,” *The Forum: Midterm Elections of 2010.*

Dante J. Scala. “Re-reading the Tea Leaves: New Hampshire as a Barometer of Presidential Primary Success, *Political Science and Politics*, vol. 36, no. 2 (April 2003).

WEEK 4: (JULY 12TH AND 14TH)

**HEALTH CARE**

**FACULTY: WHEELAN**

TUESDAY JULY 12

**Readings:**

Katherine Baicker and Amitabh Chandra. “Myths and Misconceptions about U.S. Health Insurance,” *Health Affairs*, Vol. 27, no. 6 (2008): w533 – w543.

Amitabh Chandra, Jonathan Gruber, and Robin McKnight. “The Importance of the Individual Mandate – Evidence from Massachusetts,” *New England Journal of Medicine*, January 12, 2011.

Atul Gawande. “The Cost Conundrum,” *The New Yorker*, June 1 2009.

Atul Gawande, Donald Berwick, Elliott Fisher and Mark McClellan. “10 Steps to Better Health Care,” *New York Times*, August 13, 2009.

David Goldhill. “What Washington Doesn’t Get about Health Care: Here’s How to Fix It,” *The Atlantic*, September 2009.

Staff of the *Washington Post*. *The Inside Story of America’s New Health-Care Law and What It Means for Us All*. Public Affairs, 2010.

David Leonhardt. “Making Health Care Better,” *New York Times Magazine*, November 3, 2009.

THURSDAY, JULY 14

GUEST: PRESIDENT JIM KIM

*President Kim has been asked to diagnose the current challenges related to the American health care system, explain the underlying issues, and propose specific reforms.*

WEEK 5: (JULY 19TH AND 21ST)

**TRADE AND GLOBALIZATION**

MONDAY, JULY 18

 GUEST: SENATOR ROB PORTMAN

*The guest will be asked to address the opportunities and challenges related to an increasingly interdependent global economy and how U.S. policymakers ought to react to this evolving economic landscape.*

**Readings:**

Kenneth F. Sheve and Matthew Slaughter. “A New Deal for Globalization,” *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2007.

Douglas Irwin. *Free Trade Under Fire*, Introduction and Chapters 1-4.

*Naked Economics*, Chapter 11.

David Leonhardt. “The China Puzzle,” *New York Times Sunday Magazine*, May 17, 2009.

Nicholas D. Kristof. “Where Sweatshops Are a Dream,” *New York Times*, January 15, 2009.

WEEK 6: (JULY 26TH AND 28TH)

**EDUCATION AND HUMAN CAPITAL**

**FACULTY: SACERDOTE**

MONDAY, JULY 25

JON HUNTSMAN, FORMER AMBASSADOR TO CHINA, FORMER GOVERNOR OF UTAH, AND REPUBLICAN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE

TUESDAY, JULY 26

**Readings:**

Hoxby, C. M., S. Murarka, and L. E. Building. “Charter Schools in New York City: Who Enrolls and How They Affect Their Students' Achievement,” *NBER Working Paper*, April 2009.

Claudia Goldin and Lawrence Katz. *The Race Between Education and Technology*, Harvard University Press, 2010, Chapters TBD.

Gordon, Kane, and Staiger. “Identifying Effective Teachers Using Performance on the Job,” The Hamilton Project, Discussion Paper 2006-01, April 2006.

Steven Brill. “The Teachers’ Unions’ Last Stand: How Obama’s Race to the Top Could Revolutionize Public Education,” *New York Times Magazine*, May 23, 2010.

Steven Brill. “The Rubber Room: The Battle Over New York City’s Worst Teachers,” *The New Yorker*, August 31, 2009.

James Heckman. “Catch ‘em Young,” *Wall Street Journal*, January 10, 2006.

Trip Gabriel. “Many Charter Schools, Varied Grades,” *New York Times*, May 2, 2010.

THURSDAY, JULY 28

JOEL KLEIN, FORMER CHANCELLOR, NEW YORK CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

*The guest has been asked to discuss the importance of human capital in a modern economy, critique the state of U.S. education policies (from pre-kindergarten to university), and make specific proposals for upgrading the skills of the American workforce.*

WEEK 7: (AUGUST 2ND AND 4TH)

**POVERTY, INEQUALITY AND THE FUTURE OF THE MIDDLE CLASS**

**FACULTY: DEAN LACY**

TUESDAY, AUGUST 2

**Readings:**

Robert Reich. *Aftershock: The Next Economy and America’s Future*, 2010.

Sawhill and Haskins. “5 Myths about Our Land of Opportunity,” *Washington Post*, November 1, 2009.

Roger Lowenstein. “The Inequality Conundrum,” *New York Times Sunday Magazine*, June 10, 2007.

“Decline of the Working Man,” *The Economist*, April 30, 2011.

Larry Bartels. “What’s the Matter with *What’s the Matter with Kansas*?” September 2005.

Thomas Frank. “Class Is Dismissed,” Reply to Larry Bartels, Undated.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 4

ROBERT REICH ’68, FORMER SECRETARY OF LABOR

*Secretary Reich has been asked to speak to the current distribution of income in the United States, assess the long-term implications of these trends, and propose relevant policy changes.*

WEEK 8: (AUGUST 9TH AND 11TH)

**REGULATION AND GLOBAL FINANCE**

**FACULTY: SAMWICK, ET AL**

TUESDAY, AUGUST 9

**Readings:**

Kenneth French, *et al.* *The Squam Lake Report: Fixing the Financial System*, Princeton University Press, 2010.

Gary Gorton, “Questions and Answers about the Financial Crisis.” Testimony prepared for the Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission. February 20, 2010.

Conclusions of the Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission. *The Financial Crisis Inquiry Report: Final Report of the National Commission on the Causes of the Financial and Economic Crisis in the United States*, February 25, 2011. [Read the summary, pages xv – xxvii, and skim the rest.]

Vincent Reinhart, “A Year of Living Dangerously: The Management of the Financial Crisis of 2008,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (Winter 2011): 71 – 90.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 11

HANK PAULSON ’68, FORMER SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY

*Secretary Paulson has been asked to address how American regulators can create an environment that fosters innovation in finance while protecting the system from the kinds of reckless risk that led to the 2008 crisis.*

WEEK 9: (AUGUST 16TH AND 18TH)

**ENERGY AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

**FACULTY: WHEELAN ET AL**

TUESDAY, AUGUST 16

**Readings:**

Tol, Richard S. J. 2009. "The Economic Effects of Climate Change," *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 23(2): 29n51.

Metcalf, Gilbert E. 2009. "Market-Based Policy Options to Control U.S. Greenhouse Gas Emissions," Journal of Economic Perspectives, 23(2): 5n27.

Oates, ed. *The RFF Reader in Environmental and Resource Policy*, Chapters 3-6, 9, 10, 36-39.

“A Special Report on the Carbon Economy,” *The Economist*, December 5, 2009.

Paul Krugman. “Green Economics: How We Can Afford to Tackle Climate Change,” *New York Times Magazine*, April 11, 2010.

David Owen. “Green Manhattan,” *The New Yorker*, October 18, 2004.

Jon Gertner. “The Rise and Fall of the G.D.P.,” *New York Times Magazine*, May 10, 2010.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 18

JEFF IMMELT ’78, CEO OF GENERAL ELECTRIC

*Mr. Immelt has been asked to identify the key domestic and international challenges related to energy and the environment, critique the relevant current federal policy, and propose specific policy changes.*

WEEK 10: (TUESDAY, AUGUST 23RD)

**SO WHAT DOES THE PUBLIC THINK OF ALL THIS?**

**FACULTY: WHEELAN AND BROOKS**

TUESDAY, AUGUST 23

FRANK NEWPORT, THE GALLUP ORGANIZATION

*Mr. Newport will speak about public attitudes towards many of the policy issues addressed throughout the course.*

**Readings:**

TBD